DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 238 741 SO 014 867

AUTHOR Larson, Kenneth L.
TITLE Community Study. A Guide for Teachers.
INSTITUTION Santa Cruz County Office of Education, CA.
PUB DATE Jan 77
NOTE 30p.
PUB TYPE Guides - Classroom Use - Guides (For Teachers) (052)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Community Characteristics; Community Resources; *Community Study; Elementary Education; *Experiential Learning; *Learning Activities; Local History; Teaching Methods
IDENTIFIERS California (Santa Cruz); Environmental Awareness; PF Project

ABSTRACT

Designed for elementary school teachers in Santa Cruz, California, this book outlines an experiential approach to community study. Because the term community can encompass a scope as narrow as the school or as wide as the region, these guidelines are adaptable to several elementary grade levels. The book is arranged in six sections. The first three sections focus on three major dimensions of community study--the natural environment, the environment as it existed years ago, and the community as it exists today. Section 1 contains 15 techniques for helping children become aware of their outdoor environment as it exists today and as it existed in the past. Numerous activities involve students in using their senses, observing numerical and spatial characteristics, using art to express feelings, interviewing the elderly, visiting museums, and finding old pictures and memorabilia. Section 2 lists topics to consider in studying early history. Resources and activities are provided for each topic. Topics and subtopics for use in comparing the historical community with the present one are described in section 3. The remaining three sections summarize additional activities and resources related to community study. Field trips, home projects, and school activities are detailed in section 4. Section 5 reviews a variety of general and Santa Cruz county material and human resources. The final section summarizes organizational strategies and problems which may be encountered in such a study. A bibliography concludes the book. (LP)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED238741

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

☐ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
✓ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official NIE position or policy.

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY
Kenneth L. Larson

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

COMMUNITY STUDY

A Guide for Teachers

by

Kenneth L. Larson

January 1977

SP 014 867

Santa Cruz County Office of Education
Richard R. Fickel, Superintendent
701 Ocean Street Santa Cruz, California 95060

OFFICE OF EDUCATION
SANTA CRUZ COUNTY
RICHARD R. FICKEL, SUPERINTENDENT
EDUCATIONAL MEDIA & TECHNOLOGY CENTER

TO: TEACHERS AND ADMINISTRATORS

FROM: KEN LARSON, Director
Instructional Support Services

SUBJECT: COMMUNITY STUDY - A GUIDE FOR TEACHERS

I have been asked by a number of people to share this short teacher's guide which grew out of my work in England and also with teachers and children in the Bonny Doon Elementary School in Santa Cruz County. Through the encouragement of Howard Hazeltine, Principal, I have enjoyed working with Joyce Dempewolf and her fourth grade children probing into the history of this beautiful mountain community.

As a result of a recent conversation at our last ACSA breakfast meeting, I realize now that I should have extended the dimensions of community study to include considerations for the "future." Concern for the future is shared by many and should be added to the past and present as an important dimension of community study. Hopefully others will build on the ideas presented in this guide to make it a practical, changing, and working tool for teachers.

Please send me your ideas for using the community to enhance learning. I will be happy to share them with others who are interested. Let me know if you need additional copies of this guide (call 425-2306 or from Watsonville 688-2033, ext. 2306).

KLL/nc
Enclosure

CONTENTS

	Page
WHY STUDY YOUR LOCAL COMMUNITY?	1
YOUR COMMUNITY'S NATURAL ENVIRONMENT - PRESENT AND PAST	3
The Natural Community Today.	3
The Natural Community Yesterday.	7
Content of the Natural Community and Related Resources	8
EARLY HISTORY OF YOUR COMMUNITY - IMPORTANT QUESTIONS	9
YOUR COMMUNITY YESTERDAY AND TODAY - TOPICS AND SUB-TOPICS.	11
A SUMMARY OF ACTIVITIES RELATED TO COMMUNITY STUDY.	15
Working at Home.	17
Field Trips and Correspondence With Your Community	17
Activities Within the School	18
A SUMMARY OF PEOPLE, PLACES, AND THINGS WHICH PROVIDE RESOURCES FOR COMMUNITY STUDY	19
SOME CONCLUDING THOUGHTS.	23
BIBLIOGRAPHY.	26

WHY STUDY YOUR LOCAL COMMUNITY?

Curriculum which is the basis for children's activities in our schools can come from various sources. Tradition, state frameworks, and courses of study account for many of our goals, whereas textbooks, workbooks, and various media have accounted for much of the content and methods we are using. Today, however, many teachers are finding that a balance between the textbook and active experience during the school day provides for more lasting learning as well as a school day which is more interesting for children. The experience factor is valuable since it allows children to apply and practice skills in a meaningful way to them. Experience also tends to bring the various disciplines together in focusing on aspects of the real world.

The engagement of children in the study of their local community is an excellent way to encourage experience based learning. We know that children relate more readily and with deeper understanding when they are learning about their own particular environment.[1]

Community study can be narrow or broad, rooted in the past, or descriptive of the present as interests might dictate. The major aim of community study is for children to understand better the world around them. This includes the natural environment as well as buildings, institutions, events, and people who lived and worked in their communities in the past and those who are there now. Another equally important aim is to provide interesting activities from which children will apply important skills such as writing, research, reading, use of numbers, the arts and crafts, speaking, listening, and the skills of working together.

---

[1] Vessel, M. F. & Wong, H. H., A Primer For Environmental Trips. San Francisco: Chevron Chemical Company, 1974.

Such skills can be developed by working on long or short term projects or activities. While individual children, small groups, several classes, or even the entire school may work on a common study, the diverse interests of children will encourage work on different aspects of the study. The subsequent sharing of a variety of experiences along with the related work is a happy and beneficial activity for all. However desirable, it is not necessary to involve great numbers of children from a class or school in such activities. If but one child is actively engaged in studying his or her community there will be benefits for others as well as the child doing the study; it may motivate others to become involved.

Major dimensions of community study are defined in this guide as follows:

1. Your community's natural environment - present and past.
2. History of your community.
3. Your community today.

The socio-geographical dimensions of the term "community" can refer to your school, local neighborhood areas, the town, the city, the county, or even the region in which you live.

YOUR COMMUNITY'S NATURAL ENVIRONMENT
PRESENT AND PAST

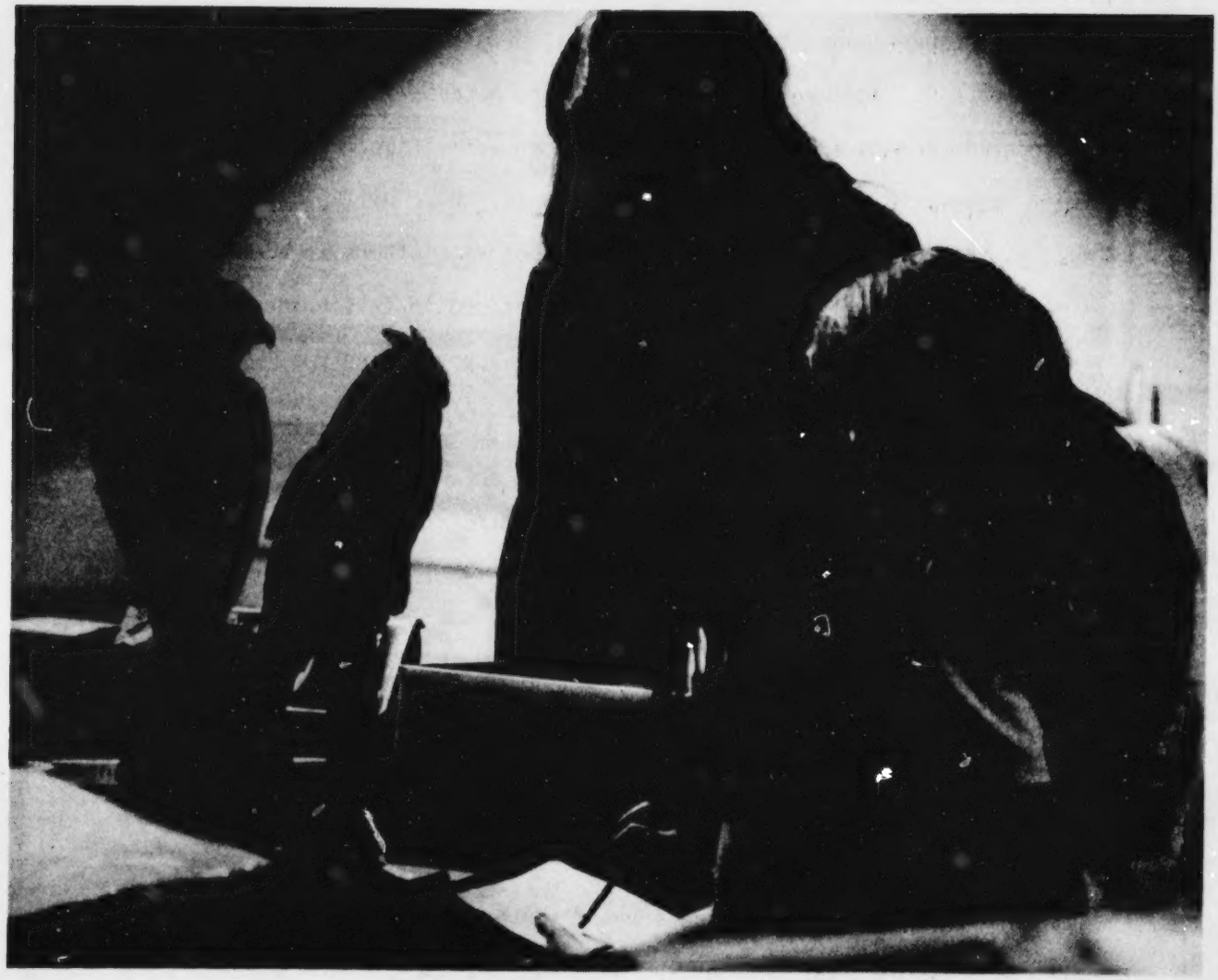
The Natural Community Today

We might first ask, "What are some of the experiences that may sharpen children's awareness of their outdoor surroundings and how can we encourage them to wonder about what they observe?"[2] Suggestions which often emerge in answer to these questions are as follows:[3]

---

[2] Schools Council, Early Explorations - Using The Environment. London: McDonald Educational, 1974.

[3] Ibid.



1. Investigating at different levels and in many directions. Too often attention is concentrated at eye level and many things on the ground and in the sky are missed.
2. Using the other senses as means of collecting information. Looking is not the only way. Also encourage and take time for listening, smelling, feeling, and tasting (under your supervision).
3. Developing a natural interest in making and arranging collections. Through such activities many plants, animals, and materials can be studied and sorted into classes or sets. Children must also learn when collecting is inappropriate for conservation and aesthetic reasons. When collecting is not advisable, children might sketch on the spot and add detail as appropriate in the classroom. The sketches will then become the collection along with proper identification and possibly some writing.
4. Making comparisons. When children begin to wonder about curious similarities and differences they find interests to follow and problems to solve.
5. Making observations about numerical and spatial aspects of the environment. There must always be a close partnership between mathematics and science. Things that attract children's attention occur in different positions and alter in size and proportion. Statements about investigations can become much more significant when expressed in quantitative terms. In this way mathematics is an aid to scientific observation. At the same time, children will often find through their scientific interests genuine reasons for using mathematical ideas and calculations, and in this way gain a deeper understanding of functional math than through working more pages of sums as exercises. This would not imply that exercises are unimportant. Both computational practice and applied math for understanding are important activities.

6. Finding appropriate words to describe experience. This is an excellent basis for developing knowledge of language; attempts to express thoughts in words can also increase understanding.

7. Using art to express feelings about experience. There is no reason why art must be taught only as a whole class activity. Artistic expression is a very natural way for children to help tell about an interesting experience. It may be just what is needed to complement a good piece of writing. Can we make it as convenient for a child to express himself or herself through the various art mediums as well as through writing or talking? Classroom organization and teacher expectations would have to support such practice in order to manage well supplied art areas and the necessary cleanup which would be the child's responsibility.

The Natural Community Yesterday

Insight on how the natural environment looked in years past would necessitate some different types of investigation in addition to direct observation. The following activities might yield interesting results:

1. Find old photographs, paintings, sketches, and maps.
2. Interview old-timers.
3. Carry out newspaper research for old features, news articles, and photos.
4. Write to government agencies for information.
5. Do library research; look for regional studies.
6. Visit museums and study the natural history collections.
7. Talk with naturalists, archeologists, geologists, or local historians.
8. Study geological features by observing cuts in the earth; possibly dig for fossils.

Content of the Natural Community and Related Resources

Content for studying your present natural environment or investigating its past might include topics such as these:

1. Land forms
2. Rocks and soils
3. Mammals
4. Amphibians and fish
5. Snakes
6. Birds
7. Insects
8. Trees and forests
9. Scrubs or chaparral
10. Plants, including wild flowers
11. Air and weather
12. Rivers, ponds and lakes
13. Seashore
14. Garden crops and gardening

Older children are likely to be interested in topics related to man's impact on the environment such as water, air, and noise pollution; and numerous other environmental problems related to people and how they live and work.

Many activities and resources related to the above topics may be found in Santa Cruz County's environmental education guides, Awareness of the Santa Cruz County Environment (Preschool-3) and Interdependence and the Santa Cruz County Environment (4-6). Another good resource focusing on the natural history and trails of local State Parks, County Parks and local State Beaches is The Santa Cruz Mountains Trail Book by Tom Taber. Those interested in school gardens might procure a copy of Gardening With Children by Thom and Patty Dunks. The California State Department of Education has helped to make residential environmental education inservice available to teachers through Humboldt County's "Humanistic Environmental Education" program. In two weekends teachers learn through experience how to explore environments at school, in the community, and at the outdoor school. The experience includes receiving and learning how to use the Green Box which is a kit containing 178 task cards in the following categories:

Do: A mental or physical activity.

Think: Conceptualization and transfer.

Show: Synthesis and communication.

EARLY HISTORY OF YOUR COMMUNITY

IMPORTANT QUESTIONS

Children as well as adults are intrigued by knowing what their community was like when men, women, and children first started settling there.

The following are possible resources, topics, activities, or questions which are useful when seeking clues to important historical questions about your community's beginnings.[4]

1. What was the early geography like during the period of settlement?
   a. The written word from books and documents.
   b. Old photos.
   c. Drawings.
   d. Maps.
   e. Talk with geographers or museum curators.
2. Why did people settle in the community?
   a. How were people's needs met?
   b. Old buildings.
   c. Vegetation, animals, and the soil.
   d. Terrain.
   e. Weather.
   f. Minerals.
   g. Roads and crossroads.
   h. Talk with anthropologists, archeologists, or local historians.
3. How did the community grow?
   a. Where did it begin?
   b. Where and when was later growth? Why?

---

[4] Iredale, David, Discovering Local History. Aylesbury, England: Shire Publications Ltd., 1973.

4. How was the community laid out?

   a. Planned or grew like "Topsy?"

   b. Original plan.

   c. Location of dwellings and other buildings.

   d. Proximity of other community aspects.

   e. Influences of one man, a few men, or possibly a company.

   f. Boundaries (reasons for; old compared to new).

5. Is there evidence of decay and desertion?

   a. Homes.

   b. Barns.

   c. Industries.

6. Where did people go to market and shop as needed?

   a. Have their habits changed?

   b. Why did people shop in certain areas?

7. How were early houses built and furnished?

   a. Examine old houses, furniture, utensils, and other artifacts.

   b. What was the standard of living?

   c. Examine the quality of workmanship; the materials used.

   d. Examine the order of growth.

   e. Look at ground plans and elevations, old photos, and sketches.

YOUR COMMUNITY YESTERDAY AND TODAY

TOPICS AND SUB-TOPICS

Community study can "...place the student in direct contact with myths, traditions, events, people, and institutions that have historically shaped the

development of his or her local community."[5] Such knowledge will not only help children better understand their communities but will help them feel that they are part of a continuing and developing human family through their participation in events which have roots in an earlier day. In addition to "root" activities, which can help to link children to the past, they might also have experiences with governmental bodies, societies, and institutions which deal with present and future problems and opportunities. Such activities will help to satisfy their human needs for a sense of the present and concern and hope for the future.

The following are topics that might be related to your community with suggested subtopics for study. Children can approach such topics and subtopics historically, as bases for describing their community today, or as bases for comparing the present with the past.

1. The natural community
    a. Stands of forest and clearings; kinds of animals and plant life.
    b. Changes in the natural community; man's impact.
2. Fields and enclosures
    a. Fences and gates; early and present materials.
    b. Clearing of forests and the development of fields.
3. Location and style of homes and other buildings
    a. Location as related to style.
    b. Materials.
    c. Architecture.
    d. Size.

---

[5] Seavey, Kent, et al, Kids Need Roots - How To Study Your Local Community - Grades 3-4. Monterey: County Office of Education, 1976.

4. Organizations

   a. Historical societies and community services organizations.

   b. Fraternal groups.

   c. Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, 4-H, FFA, and others.

5. Government and other services

   a. Local government.

   b. Schools, colleges and the university.

   c. Churches.

   d. Business establishments which provide services.

6. Agriculture, livestock, industries, and commerce

   a. Farms.

   b. Ranches.

   c. Manufacturing.

   d. Retail stores.

7. Where people work

   a. In the community.

   b. In other communities.

8. Where roads go and transportation

   a. Major and minor roads.

   b. Past and present roads.

   c. Road-building materials.

   d. Why were roads built to go where they go?

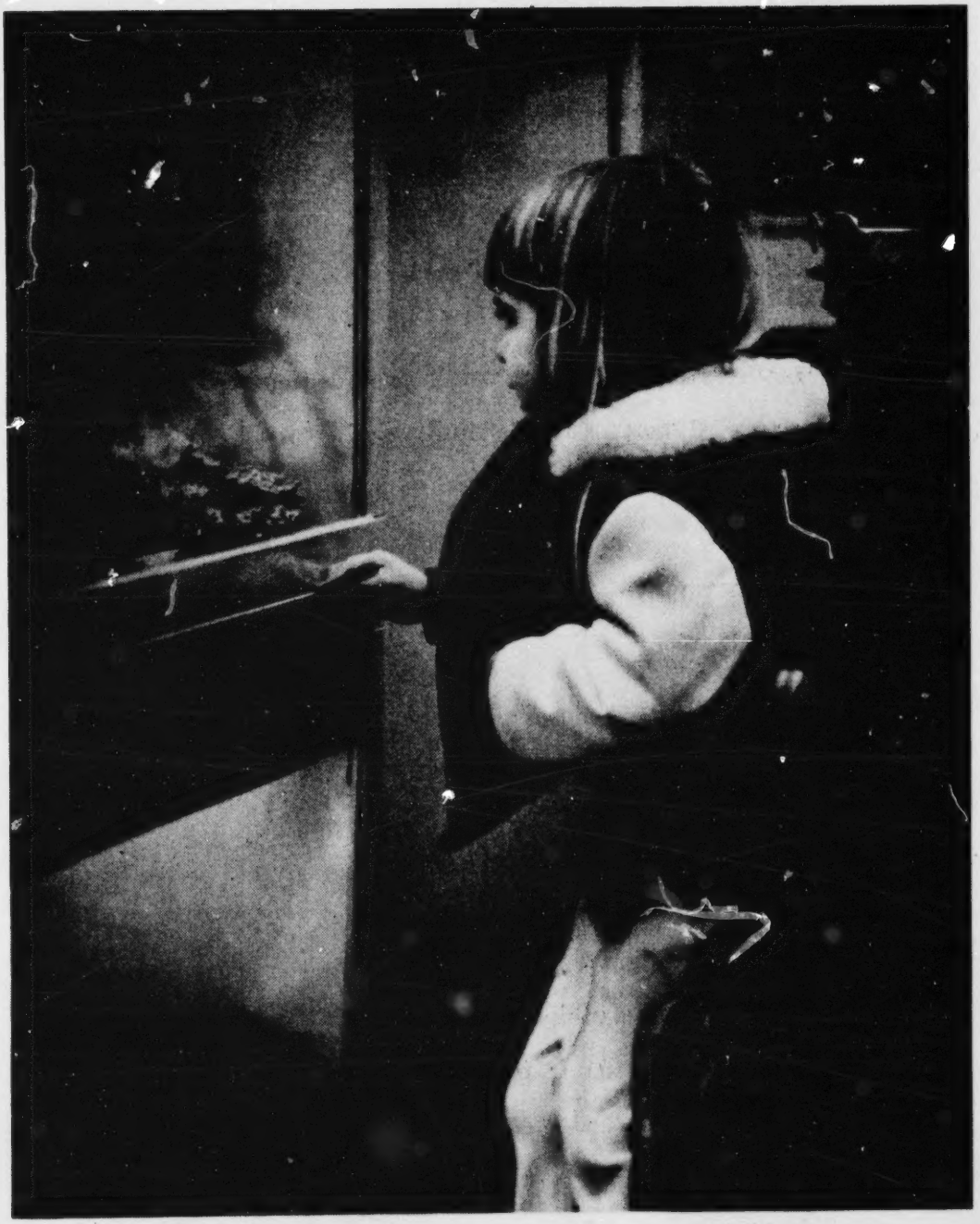
   e. Buses, trains, and airports.

9. Monuments and markers

   a. Cemeteries.

   b. Statues.

   c. Natural markers.



10. Place names

    a. Interpretations of meanings.

    b. Names of persons used as place names and why they were important.

    c. Names of events used as place names.

    d. Names related to ethnic groups.

11. Recreation

    a. Parks.

    b. Buildings.

    c. Playgrounds.

12. Literature and the arts

    a. Poems, stories, myths, paintings, music, or drama about the community.

    b. Writers and artists from the community.

13. Traditions

    a. Carnivals or fairs.

    b. Breakfasts, banquets, barbecues, socials, or picnics.

    c. Sporting events.

A SUMMARY OF ACTIVITIES RELATED TO COMMUNITY STUDY

Since work will be done outside as well as within the schools, teachers should examine the value of having small groups of children rather than the whole class make visits to carry out their studies. Principals might take small groups on such trips or possibly take the remainder of the class to release the teacher. Parents or other volunteers would be helpful on the trip or possibly with the remaining children in the classroom. Perhaps some might help in each situation.

The following activities might be considered at your school:

Working at Home

1. Explore the attic, closets, garage, and old trunks.
2. Conduct genealogical research; make family trees.
3. Explore photo albums and boxes of photographs.
4. Many items within the next two sections can also be done at home.

Field Trips and Correspondence with Your Community

1. Visit or write to museums.
2. Visit or write to places of business, industrial sites, ranches, or farms.
3. Visit natural areas; take nature walks.
4. Visit parks.
5. Visit or write to government offices and decision-making bodies.
6. Visit zoos.
7. Visit and study old churches and cemeteries. Do brass or head stone rubbings.
8. Visit different areas in the community to observe and sketch, take photos, or make films.
9. Work in community libraries; conduct research.
10. Interview or write to people in the community with special knowledge including old-timers, naturalists, and members of historical societies.
11. Collect, study, and display old photos, phonograph records, artifacts, clothing, sayings, and documents from people in the community or from other sources such as the museum or library.
12. Collect natural materials for collections as well as for arts and crafts.
13. Camp or visit for several days in a natural area and carefully observe and study the environment.
14. Attend the sixth grade outdoor school program which provides rich experiences in group living as well as natural history and conservation education.

Activities Within the School

1. Do independent library readings related to the field work.
2. Write about the field work as well as in-school activities; encourage both descriptive and creative writing, e.g. descriptions of activities, stories, myths, or poetry. Outline and then write your autobiography.
3. Do arts and crafts projects related to experiences.
4. Carry out research on names.
5. Keeping aesthetics in mind display materials, writing, and art work to share the emerging "quilt" of interests; set up special exhibits.
6. Share children's work with others through special assemblies. Encourage children to talk about their experiences as well as the projects coming from their activities.
7. Build projects from wood or cardboard; encourage related research and writing.
8. Collect old and new maps for comparison and study.
9. Construct relief maps or draw maps with appropriate symbols.
10. Develop dramatic presentations to share with others.
11. Develop musical, dance, or movement presentations to share with others.
12. Build collections including natural objects, artifacts, historical documents, or old photos.
13. Bring in storytellers or speakers with special knowledge to talk with the children.
14. Carry out observations in natural areas of the school.
15. Develop and maintain a school garden.
16. Bury a time capsule.

A SUMMARY OF PEOPLE, PLACES, AND THINGS WHICH PROVIDE RESOURCES FOR COMMUNITY STUDY

A delightful book, My Backyard History Book by David Weitzman, provides many activities and projects, such as making time capsules and rubbings and tracing genealogy, demonstrating that learning about the past can begin at home. Two books by Margaret Koch, Santa Cruz County - Parade Of The Past, and They Called It Home - Santa Cruz, California, provide a recent look at Santa Cruz County's history and architecture as well as suggested references for additional study. Another recent book focusing on the old buildings of Santa Cruz is The Sidewalk Companion To Santa Cruz Architecture by John Chase. More recently the Santa Cruz Historic Building Survey was completed including many photographs of Santa Cruz City's old homes and other buildings and organized by geographical areas. The Pajaro Valley Historical Association has just announced publication of Watsonville - Memories That Linger by Betty Lewis. The publication includes about 200 photographs and illustrations with stories about early people and events. The film, "Never A Dull Moment," which is part of the Educational Media Center's collection, provides a colorful overview of Santa Cruz County's history and present development. The film uses interviews with old-timers and old photos to help capture the County's unique flavor. Sandy Lydon of Cabrillo College and Elizabeth Calciano, formerly of U.C.S.C., are two researchers who have conducted important local studies. Sandy Lydon's work has focused on early minorities in Santa Cruz County; Elizabeth Calciano's work included extensive interviewing of old-timers which was recorded and printed for a collection in the University library.

A wealth of information about the community can be obtained through records which are kept, books and documents which are shelved, articles and artifacts which are displayed or stored, and from people coming from all walks of life. The following are potential resources:

1. Government Agencies and Institutions

   a. Assessor.

   b. Treasurer-Tax Collector.

   c. Birth and Death Registration.

   d. Health, Mental Health, and Environmental Health Services.

   e. County Office of Education.

   f. Schools, school districts, colleges, and the university.

   g. Social Services Department.

   h. Planning Departments.

   i. Libraries.

   j. Courts.

   k. Museums

   l. Police Departments.

2. Businesses and Organizations

   a. Newspapers for clipping and microfilm collections.

   b. Churches.

   c. Historical societies and community services organizations.

   d. Phone Company.

3. Illustrations

   a. Paintings.

   b. Drawings.

   c. Photographs.

   d. Aerial photos.

4. Real Estate and Business Papers

   a. Maps of developments.

   b. Advertisements.

   c. Rentals and leases.

d. Deeds.

e. Sale of property.

f. Insurance records.

g. Accounts and bills.

5. People in the Community

a. Old-timers.

b. People with special knowledge, skills, or talent.

SOME CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

One might very well be tempted to include phone numbers and addresses related to agencies or organizations and provide other such assistance for children and teachers in a resource booklet such as this. However, assistance of this kind would deny children important research and language experiences. Teachers will help children most when the many self-help and inter-disciplinary opportunities are kept in mind. The teacher's spirited interest, the right questions, and subtle help in procuring the necessary reference materials will assist children to locate important contacts and even make some of their own arrangements for studying the community.

Teachers must continually be aware of starting points throughout the day whether teaching science, math, social science, language arts, or whatever. When opportunities arise or interests flare the right resource book, a timely suggestion, or possibly an appropriate experience can embark children on a project which will yield not only important opportunities to learn about their communities, but also provide them with many occasions to apply basic skills. Another very important outcome is that children become deeply engaged in projects and, hence, school becomes more interesting and fulfilling.

A major problem teachers may realize when deciding to encourage community study is the pressure of textbooks to be completed or topics to be covered. Time allowed for in-depth engagement of children's interests is a vital need in the schools at this time. During an era when the values of affective education are recognized we must not overlook the powerful educational tool which comes with all children, their interests and the potential of in-depth study. The need for additional supervision and transportation for the children who break away from the class to carry out the field work may also present problems. If the many values of community study are realized by school boards and parents as well as by teachers and administrators, great strides will have been taken to solve such problems.

When children do engage in such activities we must have high but realistic expectations of the work coming from each child. Active work in the natural environment or in other aspects of the child's community provides the necessary experience from which many additional learning opportunities will come when back at school. An important challenge for teachers is not only to expect and nurture such follow-up activities which will bring a wholeness to the field and school-related experiences, but also to inspire children to reach for higher personal standards of work. Such experiences will do much to bring greater meaning to the lives of children as they live and grow in their communities.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Books, Articles, and Guides

Barnhart, Betty (major author) et al, Awareness of the Santa Cruz County Environment (Preschool-3). Santa Cruz: County Office of Education, 1975.

Barnhart, Betty (major author) et al, Interdependence and the Santa Cruz County Environment (4-6). Santa Cruz: County Office of Education, 1974.

Brandwein, Paul, Ekistics: A Guide for the Development of an Interdisciplinary Environmental Education Curriculum. Sacramento: California State Department of Education, 1973.

Chase, John, The Sidewalk Companion to Santa Cruz Architecture. Santa Cruz: Santa Cruz Historical Society, 1975.

Collis, M. M., "Nature Study with Young Children - Exploration Beyond the Classroom," Froebel Journal, No. 13, March 1969. (Extracts available at the Educational Media Center).

Collis, Margaret, Early Explorations - Using the Environment. London: Schools Council, 1974.

Dunks, Thom and Dunks, Patty, Gardening with Children. Santa Cruz: Harvest Press, August 1976.

Iredale, David, Discovering Local History. Aylesbury, England: Shire Publications Ltd., 1973.

Koch, Margaret, Santa Cruz County - Parade of the Past. Fresno: Valley Publishers, 1973.

Koch, Margaret, They Called It Home - Santa Cruz, California. Fresno: Valley Publishers, 1974.

Lewis, Betty, Watsonville - Memories That Linger. Fresno: Pajaro Valley Historical Association, 1976.

Page, Charles Hall & Associates, Inc., Santa Cruz Historic Building Survey. Santa Cruz: City of Santa Cruz, 1976.

Seavey, Kent, et al, Kids Need Roots - How to Study Your Local Community - Grades 3-4. Monterey: County Office of Education, 1976.

Statewide Social Sciences Education Framework Committee, Social Sciences Education Framework for California Public Schools - Kindergarten and Grades One Through Twelve. Sacramento: California State Department of Education, 1975.

Vessel, Mathew F., and Wong, Herbert H., A Primer for Environmental Trips. San Francisco: Chevron Chemical Company, 1974.

Weitzman, David, My Backyard History Book. Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1975.

Witkin, Belle Ruth, Editor, Course of Study for Grades Kindergarten Through Eight 1976-78. Hayward: Alameda County Schools Department, 1976.

Other Resources

Calciano, Elizabeth, former Editor, Regional Oral History Project, U.C.S.C., has conducted historical research in Santa Cruz; carried out interviews with many old-timers which are recorded.

California State Department of Education and the Humboldt County Superintendent of Schools, "Humanistic Environmental Education." A K-8 program of in-service training which includes use of the Green Box activity kit.

Lydon, Sandy, Division Chairman of Economics, History, Philosophy, and Political Science, Cabrillo College, has conducted studies on minority groups in early Santa Cruz County.

Santa Cruz Rotary Club, "Santa Cruz - Never A Dull Moment" - Grades K-3, 4-6. 16mm colored film, 25 min. (Educational Media Center Catalog No. 2241).